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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 001085

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PBTS](#) [EU](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: US AMBASSADORQS INITIAL MEETING WITH
MINISTER OF DEFENSE

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Classified By: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: In an October 30 meeting, Ambassador Chaudhry and Minister of Defense Vitalie Vrabie discussed Moldova's peacekeeping activities, the signing of an MCC compact agreement, U.S. and Moldovan central government security engagement with Transnistria, and the purchase of Ministry of Defense land for a new embassy compound. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In an October 30 meeting, Minister of Defense Vrabie acknowledged the United States' contributions to regional security and anti-terrorism, as well as Moldova's own responsibility in these areas. Minister Vrabie wanted to continue good relations with the United States and appreciated the positive image for Moldova and professional contacts with the U.S. military provided by Moldova's deployments to Iraq. Vrabie emphasized the Moldovan government's support for the deployment to Iraq by its allocation of national funds to pay for the deployment. He added that the next cabinet session will analyze the costs and benefits associated with the deployments. Vrabie emphasized that the Ministry of Defense was counting on U.S. reimbursement for previous deployments, as Deputy Secretary of Defense Debra Cagan had mentioned in October 2007, to increase cooperation and capabilities of Moldovan Armed Forces to participate in future international peacekeeping operations. He asked that, prior to future reimbursement, the U.S. specify that the money had to be designated for defense to avoid Moldovan misdirection of the money.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador noted that, in addition to other U.S. initiatives that brought together Transnistrians and other Moldovans, the Embassy was considering engaging non-uniformed Transnistrian officials who worked in the security realm with limited-scope security cooperation events to encourage low-level contact and discussion. Minister Vrabie accepted the proposal and was interested in working together with the Embassy on this project.

¶4. (C) In regards to a future MCC compact, Minister Vrabie reported that sources in civil society had commented that the USG would not disburse MCC funds prior to the spring 2009 elections. Vrabie assured the Ambassador that the

Moldovan government was doing all it could in a methodical manner to conduct the elections in a democratic manner. The Ambassador told Vrabie that a decision on the MCC compact was not tied to the Moldovan elections. Ambassador Chaudhry stressed that MCC Phase 1 implementation would begin in November 2008 with a public visit by MCC CEO Ambassador Danilovich. Ambassador Chaudhry characterized the MCC compact as a landmark event in the bilateral relationship.

15. (C) Ambassador Chaudhry asked Minister Vrabie about President Voronin's recent proposals for both sides of the Dniester to "demilitarize." Vrabie explained that Moldova was sitting on unmanageable stores of out-dated equipment and ammunition. President Voronin's proposal was meant not only to reduce the amount of antiquated equipment on both sides and thus reduce military tensions, but also to eliminate the Colbasna ammunition stockpile and to reduce Russian leverage. Vrabie added that Russian, Armenian, Azeri, and Belarussian commercial firms had approached Moldova to purchase much of the old arms and ammunition. Moldova preferred to destroy them with OSCE help and gain a positive reputation for not releasing its arms and ammunition into the global arms market. The Minister, said Transnistrian officials had not had an opportunity, to examine officially President Voronin's demilitarization proposal.

16. (C) Minister Vrabie assessed right- and left-bank military forces and capabilities as approximately equal, but added that it was difficult to differentiate between Russian and Transnistrian

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military and paramilitary forces. He added that such force parity was unexplainable when Moldova had a population of three million and Transnistria had only five hundred thousand. Vrabie was certain that Transnistria's military funding came from "other sources," implying Russia.

17. (U) Ambassador Chaudhry inquired about the year-long USG pursuit to purchase MoD property for a new embassy compound. Minister Vrabie responded that the government had just approved the privatization and sale through auction of the property in question. However, GOM would be willing to sell this property directly to the USG. Vrabie promised to convey the USG interest to Deputy Prime Minister Igor Dodon, who now had action on the sale, and urged the Ambassador to address Dodon directly.

18. (C) Comment: Minister Vrabie seemed to enjoy his meeting with the Ambassador and talked openly and frankly. Financial issues weigh heavily on Vrabie's mind and are a frequent topic of discussion with USG interlocutors. The majority of the ministry's budget is allocated to salaries and pensions, with the paltry remainder sorely needed for modernization and supporting Moldova's peacekeeping contributions. The USG reimbursement for prior Iraqi deployments will greatly contribute to sustaining Moldovan governmental support for military cooperation with the United States and military peacekeeping capabilities and potential.

CHAUDHRY